



Welcome To NH-V Online

*Welcome to NH-V Online,
a publication designed to better acquaint
the community with the people who deliver
the quality education to North Hunterdon-Voorhees
Regional High School District students.*

*Quality education begins with quality teaching,
administrative leadership and support staff commitment.*

*In these pages you will meet these people,
learn about their commitment to students
and gain a greater understanding
of why NH-V is a recognized leader in quality education.*



Patty Raleigh

Guidance Counselor, NHHS

On her way to the North Guidance Office, counselor Patty Raleigh has done many things in many places.

After graduating from Glassboro State College (today's Rowan University), she got her Master's in Student Personnel Services from Kean College. She maintained a professional connection with Kean through a variety of positions generally related to student personnel. In addition, she served as an adjunct professor of Spanish at both Centenary College and County College of Morris, as well as Director of International

Student Services also at Centenary. She also directed and served in many grant sponsored special programs.

"I did a great many things at the college level usually related to student services," she said. "As attractive opportunities came up, I was fortunate in being able to take advantage of them."

She came to North in 1998 and the fit has been a good one.

"This is where all my experience has led me, and I'm very glad of it," she said. "My background serves me well in the challenging life of a high school counselor."

That includes helping students negotiate the hills, valleys, turns and twists of the typical high school experience, while developing a strong focus on what they wish to do when they leave.

Mrs. Raleigh is responsible for over 200 students, a ratio she claims is "excellent in comparison to other districts." Her goal is to see each one personally, whether via group or private meetings, at least four times a year.

Specifically focused, curriculum based programs at each grade level make students aware of life after high school. For freshmen, it's basic acclimation to high school life, course selection and navigating the system itself. Sophomores are introduced to career development opportunities, while juniors become comfortable with the college and/or job selection process. For seniors, real life starts to peek through with actual college or potential career selection.

"It's critical that students find their own way, and we rarely >>>

< *Patty Raleigh*

steer anyone in a given direction,” she said. “There are a multitude of resources available to aid the search process. My greatest challenge is to guide them in discovering the direction that best suits them.”

Since Mrs. Raleigh has always thrived on variety in her professional life, she is quite happy at North.

“I can never predict what each day will be like,” she said. “And I wouldn’t have it any other way.”



Shari Ritchkin

Disciplinarian and

Supervisor of Health and Physical Education, VHS

“Once I’ve determined that I want to do something, I *will* do it.”

Shari Ritchkin is Disciplinarian and Supervisor of Health and Physical Education at VHS, and she isn’t merely talking with her head in the clouds. Well, actually she is.

One of the things she once “determined to do” was to fly. Today she has a private pilot license, instrument rating, commercial multi-engine rating and, during a recent vacation, neatly landed her Flying Club’s plane in the Bahamas.

With a degree in Health and Physical Education from the former Trenton State, and a Master’s in Supervision and Administration from New Jersey City University, she is flying through a world she is quite suited for.

Prior to coming to Voorhees, Ms. Ritchkin worked 10 years in Toms River where she coached and officiated just about every sport you can name, in addition to introducing a girl’s lacrosse program in the Colts Neck Schools. A three sport star during her own high school and college years, athletics, like flying, have always been both her dream and her passion.

“The chance to come to Voorhees was a great opportunity,” she said. “It allows me to stay connected to all the things I

enjoy. It also allows for the best use of all my experience.”

For instance, her years as a “no nonsense kind of coach” never accepting “halfway commitment” serve her well in her role as Disciplinarian.

“Our students know we hold them to high standards, and they know what we expect of them,” she said. “We have no *bad* students here. But they do occasionally need to be reminded that we *will* enforce the rules.”

These days Ms. Ritchkin has a three-hour round trip commute (on the ground) to get to Voorhees. She hardly minds it.

“It’s worth the trip to work here,” she said. “It’s a fine student body, and my colleagues are just great people. I’ve found a place where I feel I fit in, and it’s a wonderful place to be.”



Tim Flynn

Special Education/Social Studies, NHHS

It seems that Tim Flynn was destined to teach at North.

While attending nearby Phillipsburg High School, where he was a standout athlete, Principal Michael Hughes was serving as Athletic Director. When an opening came up, Mr. Hughes never forgot the talented and capable young student.

Ironically, a career in Special Education was not Mr. Flynn’s original intention. His degree from James Madison College is in Sociology, with a strong Criminology concentration. He even toyed with a career in law enforcement.

“JMC had a remarkable Special Education program,” he said. “The professors were passionate and made learning enlightening. They made me see that in this field you can truly make a difference for someone who really needs it.”

Since 1999, Tim Flynn has been doing just that. He is quick to point out the uniqueness of the program at North, where many special needs students can and do get accepted to the finest schools, and are often involved in honors courses.



< *Tim Flynn*

“What is wonderful about our students is that they want, accept and even demand the help they need,” he said. “Our entire student body is highly motivated and by that I mean *all* our students.”

He goes on to say that there are “no crutches” at North. When a student perceives they need to work a little harder, and need a little extra time with a subject, they are open to it and accept it. And he’s quite proud of them for that.

This September, Mr. Flynn will be switching gears as he enters the Social Studies Department where, in addition to that subject, he will be teaching two classes in Criminal Justice.

“The fact is, this is a place where you just want to get involved in as many things, on as many levels, as possible,” he said. “I learn so much from my students every day. I guess I just want to experience as much as I can.”



Nancy Lomas
Biology Teacher, VHS

While Nancy Lomas was a Biology major at TCNJ, she made friends with a North graduate. Her friend always spoke very well of his high school experience. Small world.

“I wanted to teach here because I knew it was a progressive district especially with regard to science,” she said. “It’s one of the few districts that demands freshman Physics as a requirement as opposed to offering it to juniors as an elective.”

Ms. Lomas’s nine years as an educator have all been spent at Voorhees, and the last four have been especially rewarding. She is in charge of the school’s growing theater program. According to Ms. Lomas, she “fell into it and landed with a thud.”

“I always did theater in high school and never forgot the experience,” she said. “It’s something that provides all kinds of students with something amazing to accomplish and a place to really belong.”

As for her own “place to really belong,” it started with her experience as a volunteer tutor in the Educational Opportunity Foundation, a program offering college preparation for underprivileged urban students. Seeing the value of education and how it can influence a person’s entire future was a life cycle experience for her.

“That was when I realized what I wanted to do with the rest of my life,” she said.

Along the way Ms. Lomas has developed a very compelling educational philosophy. It isn’t just about learning.

“I want my students to understand that what they learn is relevant to themselves, to life and to the world around them,” she said. “If we don’t succeed in that, then why are we teaching Biology at all?”

But there’s more. They have to enjoy it as well.

“It’s easy to teach students like ours who want so much to learn,” she said. “But learning and getting the grades is not nearly enough. If they dislike a subject that I love, *I’m* not happy and *I’m* not satisfied.”



Caitlin Ryan
English Teacher, NHHS

For a North English teacher, it’s all about English. Almost all. “My passion hasn’t diminished, but the subject has taken a back seat to the students themselves,” she said. “My goal is to give my students what they need to be successful after high school.”

And as she sees it, English provides a perfect vehicle for doing just that. In Ms. Ryan’s classroom, the study of the world’s finest literature is a serious business. Students learn to be inquisitive and analytical, they think critically, and they communicate their views.

“Relevancy is more important to me than simply an

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< *Caitlin Ryan*

appreciation of my subject,” she said. “I want as much as possible for students to make a connection to real life skills.”

“Book Day” is one way Ms. Ryan makes literature personal. Three or four times a marking period, on Book Day, students spend the period reading a book of their choice. By the end of the marking period, they must have the book finished to present an oral analysis and critique before the class. In this way, students make an indirect personal statement about themselves through the books they choose.

While completing her English major at TCNJ, Ms. Ryan was planning to enter law school. She quickly realized such a career would take her “much further away from students and English than I care to be.” She completed a Master of Arts in Teaching that included a stint as a Global Student Teacher in Bangkok.

She ultimately applied to teach at North due to its “focus on student achievement,” and its “very high expectations for its teachers.”

“We work within a strong community that values education and provides us with the support we need to help our students succeed,” she said. “It’s a challenge to teach in such an atmosphere of achievement, but that challenge is one of the very reasons I’m here.”



Anthony Nanni, Jr.

Health/Physical Education, VHS

Anthony Nanni was born on the fourth of July. While we’re not celebrating *his* birth on that day, after meeting him one gets the idea we ought to be.

While obtaining his BS in Health and Physical Education from Trenton State, he did his student teaching at North. That summer (1974) when an unexpected opening occurred, he was hired. Ultimately, he was among the young, enthusiastic

faculty that opened the “new” VHS.

“We all had our eye on the future then,” he said. “Not many are fortunate enough to open a new high school and help establish its traditions. Today, we’re teaching many of the children of those first students.”

From the day his high school counselor asked him his career plans, Mr. Nanni (everyone calls him “Sparky”) knew he wanted to teach physical education. A long involvement in sports, recreation, scouting and his local rescue squad made it seem a natural fit. So was working with young people.

“There’s really nothing that compares to it,” he said. “You have the chance to pitch ideas to ripe, fertile minds and watch their excitement grow. That’s the kind of students we have here.”

Always a “many irons in the fire” type of person, Mr. Nanni serves as co-advisor to the school’s active Key Club, and head basketball coach in addition to his full course load. He also has the distinction of writing the original Senior Health Curriculum back in 1983. The same one that has since expanded into a life skills survey including sex and STD education, career paths, parenting and even living wills.

A lot has changed in 34 years.

“Everything seems far more intense than it used to be,” he said. “Our students take their academics, their future and their responsibilities far more seriously today. Of course, this reflects the values they see at home.”

Mr. Nanni can speak endlessly about the Key Club and the school’s strong spirit of giving back, citing the “special gifts and talents of students who know how to get involved to help others.”

Still, in 34 years on the job, one thing has remained constant.

“Being part of someone’s personal growth is an experience you never get used to,” he said. “Affecting change in a young person’s life is a truly honorable thing.”

Mission Statement

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District, a district committed to innovation, personal excellence, high achievement and community partnership, provides all students with personalized opportunities through a broad spectrum of exemplary educational experiences to develop their fullest potential, to foster lifelong learning and to become responsible citizens in a continually changing society.